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ABSTRACT

A rationale is presented for why counselors need to become involved in draft counseling. The author discusses five basic reasons why draft counseling should be offered and then considers a number of examples which indicate the kinds of problems which young draft-age men face: anxiety, moral dilemma, family pressures, self image, etc. The professional counselor's crucial role in the area of draft counseling is viewed as threefold: (1) establishing its legitimacy; (2) receiving training and then training others; and (3) working with the exceptionally difficult referrals. The question of values is briefly considered. The author's recommendations concerning the professional counselor and draft counseling conclude the paper. (TL)

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THE DRAFT AND COUNSELING

Marylou Kincaid

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The draft is the greatest problem facing young people today. All young men face the legal and moral questions of military service when they are required to register with their local draft board at age 18. A young man's response to this military obligation affects every other decision he makes and choice that he has. The purpose of draft counseling is to provide young men with impartial information about their rights, alternatives, and obligations under the Selective Service System. Until recently, students, lawyers, clergymen, and other experienced laymen outside the traditional counseling structures have become familiar with the draft law and have served as draft counselors. Unfortunately, professional counselors have been slow, and sometimes afraid, to respond. Draft counseling has been and is still regarded by many as an unnecessary, illegal, nonprofessional, and even unpatriotic activity.

There are five basic reasons for offering draft counseling:

1. Most people are not fully aware of their rights under the Selective Service System. Furthermore, many are unaware of their ignorance of the law because they are confidently operating on false information gathered from friends, rumors, and the news media. Since the System assumes that a registrant is potentially available for induction unless he presents evidence proving eligibility for deferment, it is important that all young men have complete information about the requirements for each classification.

2. Secondly, the local boards volunteer little information to registrants. Most young men do not know what information is available or how to ask for it. Many are afraid to go to their board for information for fear of becoming "known" by the clerk; others feel that they will not receive impartial advice.

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3. Thirdly, as volunteers who meet once or twice a month, local board members frequently make classification and procedural errors. They are often unfamiliar with the Selective Service law and rely on the judgments of their full-time clerks or their own personal opinions and biases. In difficult or borderline cases they sometimes base their decisions on the registrant's personal appearance or choice of words in a letter. Yet, for the registrant and his family the consequences of a wrong or ignorant decision can be severe.

4. Fourthly, the System discriminates against poor, less educated, working class youth, especially Black youth. Student and occupational deferments have helped individuals avoid military service who could make their way through college and into a job in the national health, safety, or interest. Further, health deferments are not obtainable by the poor if they cannot afford to go to doctors for diagnosis, treatment, and a letter to the draft board confirming a deferrable condition. Conscientious objector status is not available to working class youth untrained in theme writing and unable to articulate their opposition to war in a highly intellectualized manner. A hardship deferment is even less available to the poor, uneducated, unemployed man since Selective Service believes it is improving his lot by providing him with a roof over his head, 3 meals a day, and a check to send home to his family on welfare.

5. Finally, most young men face the draft with anxiety and anguish. It clearly takes priority over their educational, vocational, and family plans. It can interrupt or even terminate a student's education and pressure some unwilling students to remain in school when they would rather do otherwise. It seems clear that thousands of the men in Canada avoiding military service might not have had to take that drastic step had they received adequate information and counseling.

Draft counseling is legal and most draft counselors do not counsel men who have gone outside the law or those already in the military. Such cases call for lawyers and people trained in military law. Draft counseling is usually conducted in a one-to-one counseling relationship since each person's situation is different. A good counselor helps the registrant to match his personal circumstances and desires against all possible options so that he can make a rational choice about the draft, a choice which he can live without shame or regret. Although draft counselors, like all counselors, have personal

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biases which may affect the counseling relationship, most try not to impose their views on their counselees.

Contrary to popular opinions, draft counseling is not draft evasion and draft counselors cannot "get people out." At best they can maximize a registrant's chances of receiving fair treatment from the System and help him make personally satisfying decisions without breaking the law or leaving the country. In our experience most young men do not simply want to evade the draft because they are cowardly, unpatriotic or selfishly egocentric. Most people we see are sincerely disturbed by the moral ambiguities of war, military service, and especially Vietnam. The following examples indicate the kinds of problems which young men face:

CASES I, II, III

The draft imposes certain constraints on a young man's plans and raises a host of profound moral, religious, and political questions. This means that draft counseling is more than information transfer. The counselor must help the individual to cope with the information as well as the personal and moral anxieties that affect his decisions.

Basically, young men have four options topen to them: induction, deferment, resistance, or exile. Since resistance and exile carry negative social sanctions and extreme personal hardship, most people choose from the System's options. While many young men follow the clearly prescribed paths into military service, an increasing number either resent the interruption of their personal lives, regard military service as detrimental to their growth, or raise questions about their proper responsibilities. The

war in Indochina has produced special anguish for thousands facing the draft. These young people feel caught between family pressure for conformity to their military obligation and their own unwillingness to participate in what they feel is an immoral war. They must make a decision about the draft in the light of multiple loyalties, a decision which may be contrary to values they have internalized from home and community. Making a decision that may be viewed as unpatriotic is difficult at best.

Some college students express guilt over their privileged deferment status. They feel guilty about attending school while some of their friends are in Vietnam. Others feel a basic contradiction in trying to develop new values about war while attending what they regard as war related institutions by the grace of Selective Service.

Increasing numbers of students now regard the Vietnam war as one miserable piece of a generally corrupt society whose institutions oppress and dehumanize people. They seek to direct their energies into domestic social issues hoping to create a society in which war is eliminated. Hence, the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction was not entirely incorrect when he perversely characterized such people as an "abortion-homosexuality-anti-Vietnam war-police brutality-pornography-legalized marijuana package." Whether or not counselors wish to encourage the emergent life styles and anti-Vietnam war values of contemporary youth may be irrelevant; it is already happening and somehow the profession must come to terms with it.

Young men make decisions about the draft at a time when they are trying to develop an image of themselves as men. The military offers them one version of manhood. The primary recruiting appeal which claims

that the armed forces build men has been an effective inducement for enlistment as well as a psychological pressure against dissent. This image of service as an opportunity for young men to learn proper behavior and mature into real men is still held by many parents, guidance counselors, and law officials. This means that young men who do not wish to join, especially those thinking about conscientious objection or resistance, have to face their own as well as the public's attitudes toward masculinity.

Questions of courage and patriotism are also involved. Draft boards frequently ask a C. O. applicant what he would do if his mother were being raped by enemy soldiers. On the other hand some men who fail military examinations may feel embarrassed or ashamed. Draft counseling helps young people get through periods of situational crisis or anxiety in which they feel that their integrity is threatened or their manhood at stake over the draft.

Draft counseling does not exclude women, either as counselors or as participants in the counseling process. A young man's wife, mother, or girlfriend will often influence his decisions about the draft. This increases the potential for conflict and anxiety since each person looks at the draft from a different point of view. A common complaint from men is the feeling that females cannot understand "what a guy has to go through." Related to this are the cases of mothers or girlfriends who pressure a man to avoid service by any moral or immoral means necessary when he is either genuinely struggling with the moral issues or actually eager to join.

On the other hand, a man may not realize how he hurts his wife, mother, or girlfriend by internalizing his struggles and refusing to discuss the mutual consequences of his decisions. Good draft counseling

can help a family or couple understand each other and arrive at mutually satisfying decisions. Young people come to draft counseling with varying levels of anxiety which need to be modulated to levels that make decision making possible. A common problem is panic, especially when previously indifferent men pass a preinduction physical or receive either a 1-A classification or an induction order. Some people come with little or no anxiety because they either believe mistaken rumors about foolproof methods for escaping or do not realize that the government can actually take them away for service or prison. Most counseling requires periodic sessions to give information, stimulate action, provide support, and guide the registrant step by step through procedures.

Professional counselors have a crucial role to fulfill in meeting need for draft counseling. They can begin by helping to establish the legitimacy of draft counseling in their respective institutions. They can take the initiative or support a group of students and faculty in establishing draft counseling services. Secondly, receiving training in draft counseling, they can then assist in preparing and supervising student counselors. Thirdly, they can advise or accept referrals in difficult cases, especially where a draft problem is a mask for underlying emotional difficulty. This kind of involvement expands the functions of the student counseling center; builds bridges to students who feel they have to be sick before seeing a counselor; and establishes credibility with some more politically and socially alienated students who regard counselors as servants of the Establishment.

Draft counseling is an example of what might be termed a parallel and counter counseling model. It has operated outside traditional

counseling programs and challenged the profession's primary concern with individual, nonsocial methods of change. Draft counseling begins to relate an individual's self-exploration and decision-making to the critical issues of war and peace. It challenges the professed neutrality of the counselor on "values questions" and forces him to examine his own attitudes toward the draft and war.

The lottery has not simplified the draft nor will the enactment of presently proposed changes end the need for counseling. Since it is also unlikely that a volunteer army will replace the present System in the near future, the provision for draft counseling at the high school level is a critical necessity. In this light, it seems promising that school boards in several cities have made official provisions for draft counseling including Phoenix, where my husband has had some success in training counselors and students and in getting draft information into the high schools.

As individuals and as a profession, we need to go beyond simply a private understanding and consent to the need for draft counseling. I wish, therefore, to make the following recommendations:

1. We ought to encourage our respective institutions and APGA to recognize and endorse professional and peer draft counseling as a necessary and legitimate part of a counselor's normal activity and outreach.

2. We need to become aware of and use the draft counseling referral sources in our area and if there are none, we ought to become trained in draft counseling ourselves. Further, we ought to encourage graduate schools of counseling to incorporate draft counseling in their training programs.

3. Following the example set by the American Psychiatric Association at a recent meeting in Tuscon, we ought to move in favor of total and immediate withdrawal from the war in Southeast Asia.

4. We ought to urge the President and Congress to repeal the draft on June 30, 1971 in accord with the President's Commission on an all-volunteer armed force.

5. As counselors, we ought to present alternative images of man that do not define courage, bravery, and masculinity in terms of warfare. Here we are reminded of Geoffrey Gorer's description of genuinely peaceful societies: "they all manifest enormous gusto for concrete physical pleasures - eating, drinking, sex, laughter - and ... they all make very little distinction between the ideal characters of men and women, particularly that they have no ideal of brave, agressive masculinity."

Let us make love, not war.